

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, EEC

SUBJECT: BRITAIN'S EC COMMISSIONERS TO CAMPAIGN FOR UK
MEMBERSHIP

REF: LONDON 16851

1. BRITISH PRESS TODAY (JANUARY 3) REPORTS PLANS BY
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SIR CHRISTOPHER SOAMES, BRITAIN'S SENIOR MEMBER OF

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, TO CAMPAIGN IN UK ON BEHALF OF BRITAIN'S REMAINING IN EC. BETWEEN JANUARY 24 AND MARCH 24, HE WILL TOUR ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND WALES TO ADDRESS TWELVE "SEMINARS" SPONSORED BY THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. HIS STATED AIM IS TO PRESENT THE FACTS ABOUT BRITISH MEMBERSHIP. HE ALSO AGREED TO TAKE ON SIMILAR SPEAKING ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY AND THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY.

2. DURING THE COMING MONTHS, GEORGE THOMSON, FORMER LABOR MINISTER AND BRITAIN'S OTHER EC COMMISSIONER, IS ALSO EXPECTED TO ENTER CAMPAIGN, ADDRESSING TRADE UNION AND LABOR PARTY AUDIENCES. SINCE THE LABOR PARTY WILL NOT YET HAVE ADOPTED A POSITION ON THE FUTURE OF BRITISH MEMBERSHIP, THOMSON WILL BE SPONSORED BY THE LABOR COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE, A PRO-MARKET LOBBY.

3. COMMENT: QUESTIONS WILL BE RAISED, ESPECIALLY BY THE ANTI-MARKETEERS, ABOUT THE PROPRIETY OF EC CIVIL SERVANTS ENTERING INTO A DOMESTIC POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. THOMSON, IN PARTICULAR, CAN EXPECT A ROUGH RECEPTION FROM HIS ERSTWHILE COLLEAGUES. BOTH MEN HAVE ALWAYS MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THEY REGARDED IT AS ONE OF THEIR PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITIES AS EC COMMISSIONERS TO KEEP THEIR COUNTRYMEN INFORMED ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF EC MEMBERSHIP. THE DAILY TELEGRAPH HAS ALREADY APPROVED THEIR ENTRY INTO THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN, AND OTHER BRITISH NEWSPAPERS CAN BE EXPECTED TO DO THE SAME.

4. IN THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF, SOAMES AND THOMSON WILL NO DOUBT CONCENTRATE ON SEEKING TO DEMONSTRATE THAT BRITAIN CANNOT AFFORD TO WITHDRAW FROM THE EC. THEY WILL ALSO SEEK TO COUNTER ARGUMENTS THAT BRITISH MEMBERSHIP INVOLVES AN UNACCEPTABLE LOSS OF SOVEREIGNTY. THE TIMES, DECEMBER 31, PUBLISHED A DETAILED REBUTTAL BY SOAMES OF THE POINTS MADE BY TONY BENN IN HIS CONTROVERSIAL LETTER TO HIS CONSTITUENTS (REFTEL).

5. AS MANY OBSERVERS HAVE BEEN QUICK TO POINT OUT, THE IMPLICATIONS OF SOAMES' PROJECTED SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

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EXTEND BEYOND THE ISSUE OF BRITISH EC MEMBERSHIP. THEY WILL PUT HIM BACK IN THE PUBLIC EYE AT HOME AND GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO TEST THE WATER FOR A POSSIBLE BID FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. HE WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO MAKE ANY SUCH MOVE UNTIL AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN, BUT ONCE BRITISH MEMBERSHIP IS SAFELY REAFFIRMED, HE HAS MADE NO SECRET OF HIS DESIRE TO RETURN TO DOMESTIC POLITICS.

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